2. Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment.

3. Providing financial assistance to exporters/growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units, establishment of pre-cooling/ cold storage facilities, integrated post-harvest handling systems (pack houses).

4. Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control and modernization of processing units.

5. Establishment of vapour heat treatment facilities for improving the acceptability of the product especially the mangoes in overseas markets.

6. Grant of Air Freight Subsidy for exports of floricultural items and selected fresh fruits and vegetables.

7. Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs and exhibitions.

8. Setting up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various international Airports for handling export of perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

9. Providing assistance in development of data base and dissemination of market information.

10. Providing assistance for setting up of laboratories for testing of products to ensure quality, technology transfer, process upgradation and product development.

(c) It is difficult to estimate the extent to which such measures would boost country's foreign exchange earnings as exports would depend on international demand and supply position, international and domestic prices, surprises available for exports, production of farm goods meeting the quality standards of overseas buyers, consumer preferences and terms of trade.

India's commitment to WTO

1566. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to an editorial published in the Hindustan Times, dated the 21st November, 1998 captioned "Patently Slow" with regard to India's commitment to the WTO to bring about requisite legislation/amendments in the Patents Act by April 19, 1999 but going very slow;

(b) whether the US have been resorting to unilateral actions against Indian exports and erecting non-tariff barriers; and

if so, what efforts Government have made so far to work out an agreed formula in the national interest while giving the country access to global trading system?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA KRISHNA HEDGE): (a) and (b) It has since been decided to introduce a Bill in Parliament to amend the Patents Act, 1970.

(b) and (c) US had taken measures under their national law to prohibit the import of shrimps from India, and some other country if they are not harvested without using "turtle excluder devices". This was challenged in the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism by India and others. The WTO Panel and Appellate Body have ruled in India's favour and recommended that USA should bring its measures in conformity with WTO. The Government keeps national interests in view while addressing such unilateral actions.